

# DESCRIPTIONS OF THE NESTS AND EGGS OF FOUR SPECIES OF AUSTRALIAN BIRDS.

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## EPHTHIANURA CROCEA, Castlenau & Ramsay.

### Crescent-marked Ephthianura.

This species, the most diminutive member of the genus *Ephthianura*, was one of the novelties secured by Mr. Gulliver in a collection of birds formed on the Norman River, near the Gulf of Carpentaria, North Queensland. The collection was acquired by the late Comte de Castlenau and the species jointly described by Dr. Ramsay and himself in a paper contributed to this Society in December, 1876. Subsequently, the late Mr. T. H. Boyer-Bower obtained several specimens near Derby, North-west Australia, the only other district it has been recorded from, although its range probably extends eastwards across the continent to the Norman River. A nest of this species is a small cup-shaped structure, irregularly formed on the outside of thin dried stalks of herbaceous plants, and lined inside with fine wiry grasses and rootlets. Eggs three in number for a sitting, oval in form and pure white, with minute dots and spots of blackish-red sparingly distributed over the surface of the shell; and not to be distinguished except for their slightly smaller size from those of its close congener *E. aurifrons*. Length, (A)  $0.6 \times 0.43$  inch; (B)  $0.62 \times 0.45$  inch; (C)  $0.62 \times 0.44$  inch.

*Hab.*—Gulf District of Northern Queensland, North-west Australia.

## PTILOIS MACLEAYANA, Ramsay.

### Sir William Macleay's Honey-eater.

A nest of this species taken by Mr. J. A. Boyd from a *Mango* tree near the Herbert River on the 16th of December, 1896, is a deep cup-shaped structure slung by the rim to a thin forked

horizontal twig. It is composed chiefly of cocoa-nut fibre, with which is intermingled on the lower portion a few broad leaves, skeletons of leaves, the outer covering from the stem of a banana, the paper-like bark of a *Melaleuca*, and some egg-bags of spiders. In the lining, which is composed entirely of cocoa-nut fibre, are two feathers from the lower portion of the breast of *P. macleaniana*, and evidently detached from the female while sitting. Externally it measures three inches and a quarter in diameter by four inches in depth; internally, two inches and a quarter in diameter by two inches and a half in depth. Eggs two in number for a sitting, oval in form, of a pale fleshy-buff ground colour sprinkled with numerous distinct but very minute dots and freckles of chestnut-red, which are darker and more thickly disposed on the larger end, where they are intermingled with a few underlying markings of dull violet grey. The texture of the shell is fine and its surface slightly glossy. Length, (A)  $0.92 \times 0.67$  inch; (B)  $0.9 \times 0.67$  inch.

*Hab.*—North-eastern Queensland.

MYZOMELA ERYTHROCEPHALA, Gould.

Red-headed Honey-eater.

A nest taken on the 27th of September, 1897, is a very small cup-shaped structure suspended by the rim to a thin forked horizontal twig. Outwardly it is formed of very fine strips of bark and bark fibre, intermingled with a small quantity of cobweb, and more especially where the rim of the nest is attached to the fork, the inside being entirely lined with some very fine yellowish-white vegetable fibre. Externally it measures two inches in diameter by one inch and a half in depth; internally, one inch and a half in diameter by one inch in depth. Eggs two in number for a sitting, oval in form, pure white with freckles, irregularly shaped spots and blotches of pale red, unevenly distributed towards the larger end, where in one specimen they form an ill-defined zone. Length, (A)  $0.64 \times 0.45$  inch; (B)  $0.61 \times 0.46$  inch.

*Hab.*—Northern Australia, New Guinea.

## LOPHOPHAPS FERRUGINEA, Gould.

## Rust-coloured Bronze-wing.

Although freely distributed in favourable situations over a wide expanse of country, the habitat of the present species, unlike its near congener *Lophophaps plumifera*, is entirely restricted to the western portion of the Australian continent. Its range extends from the Murchison River in West Australia to the Lennard River in the north-western portion of that colony. Future research will doubtless extend this range through a similar tract of country as far north as Cambridge Gulf.

For an opportunity of describing properly authenticated eggs of this species, I am indebted to Mr. A. Zietz, F.L.S., Assistant Director of the South Australian Museum. These eggs, two in number, formed part of the collection brought to Adelaide by Mr. G. A. Keartland, one of the members of the ill-fated Calvert Exploring Expedition. They were taken in March, 1897, near the Fitzroy River, North-west Australia, by Mr. J. Harris, from a slight grass-lined depression beneath the shelter of a spinifex tussock. In shape they are swollen ellipses, and are more globular than the generality of pigeon's eggs, the grain of the shell being very fine, and its surface slightly glossy. They are of a uniform pale cream colour. Length, (A)  $0.94 \times 0.77$  inch; (B)  $0.9 \times 0.77$  inch.

Dr. E. C. Stirling, F.R.S., the Director of the South Australian Museum, informs me that the ornithological results of the Calvert Exploring Expedition in West Australia, which include some interesting field notes and original observations made by Mr. Keartland on this and many other species, will shortly be published in the Transactions of the Royal Society of South Australia.